The Nature of Brahman
SaguNa and NirguNa Brahman

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The nature of Brahman

Before understanding the nature of Brahman, one should understand what exactly Brahman is. When the Vedas use the word Brahman, what exactly is meant by the word Brahman'.

At the same time, one should also inquire as to why exactly it is important or useful to know about Brahman. Only then a burning interest will arise in the subject matter and one will genuinely try to understand Brahman and its nature.

Appreciation of bondage

We should inquire as to why I am interested in knowing what Brahman is.

- Is it because I have heard about it from some reputable persons and I am interested in knowing it. For example, I have heard that general relativity is a very conceptual topic and the entire world accepts its accuracy and I don't know it, hence I should know it.
- Is it because I have a feeling that sages know this mysterious Brahman and they achieved immortality and hence there is a fear of missing out. That I am very competitive and hence I should get the maximum possible out of this life.
- Is it out of intellectual curiosity? Is it out of desire to understand VedAnta and acquire additional knowledge?

If we are driven by such propelling factors, then VedAnta will appear as just another academic discipline and I am afraid that we would not be able to reap the actual fruit which VedAnta is meant for.

Genuine spirituality starts when we appreciate that we are in bondage. That we are in a prison. That we are unable to breathe. That at each and every moment of our life, we are chained. Always afraid, we are agitated and are never peaceful. Nothing untoward should happen to my child, my name and

fame should grow, my job should not be lost, my near and dear ones should not leave me, the wrong things I have done in secret should not become public etc. Hundreds and thousands of desires and fears literally chain me. Bound by that, unable to even breathe, I genuinely enquire - how do I get out of this bondage.

We should pause here and reflect as to whether we truly feel in our heart of hearts that we are in bondage, or do we feel that life is good, going on nicely!

I feel that our first endeavour in the path of spirituality should be the appreciation of bondage through close examination of our mental behaviour and consequent arising of desire to be free from this bondage.

Ignorance is the cause of bondage

So, in reality, our endeavour is to be free from bondage. Whatever promises to help us remove the bondage is welcome for us. However, to solve a problem, we need to understand the problem first. So, our inquiry starts not with what is Brahman, but what is this bondage.

A close examination of our mental states would reveal to a sensitive mind that it is fear which imprisons us, and it is desires which imprison us. They have really chained us. So much so, that like a slave, we keep on toiling day in and day out pleasing the desires. A desire arises, and here we start to work to serve it, like a slave. This is bondage. Always afraid that nothing undesired should happen, always anxious that only desired happens - we are literally unable to breathe.

Fine. I want to breathe. I want to be free from toil. I want to be free from this bondage. But what vastu is this bondage. It is a mental fluctuation, fine. But really what is it?

Here, Vedanta comes as an academic scientific subject and helps us to analyse this problem of bondage. It uses an anumAna, an inference, and

demonstrates that whatever is seen, is like a dream, like an illusory snake on the rope. That whatever is seen, is illusory, on account of being seen.

Now, since my bondage, my fears, my desires are seen, known by me, they are illusory. And being illusory, they are products of ignorance. Like the illusory snake.

If I were to get rid of ignorance, I would get rid of bondage also.

And thus, the problem of bondage essentially boils down to the problem of ignorance. The details of the nature of ignorance are subject matter of another discussion.

Whose ignorance, where ignorance?

There are only two entities in this universe, one is seer (AtmA) and the other is seen (anAtmA). We have learnt that the seen is a product of ignorance. Naturally, then ignorance should be of seer, located in the seer and should be about the seer. There can be no other locus or object of ignorance. The seer-hood is also a seen and hence it is the seer without seer-hood which is both the locus and the object of ignorance. [कारणत्ववत्साक्षित्वमपि स्वाज्ञानकृतमित्युक्तमेव प्रसङ्गात्प्रकटयति- Anandagiri, 1.4.372, BrihadAraNyaka Upanishad VArtika TIkA]

And this seer without seer-hood is my own real Self.

Manifestation of ignorance

This whole analysis shows that the seer, who I truly am, is ignorant about himself. Not knowing himself to be the seer, he confuses himself to be a seen. He identifies himself with the body and mind, which are nothing but the seen. And says - I am a man, I am a woman, I am tall, I am short, I am happy, I am sad, I am.

All these are manifestations of this ignorance and are the source of bondage. Just feel that you are not actually this body or mind and analyse. All fears and desires vanish. All bondage will be a non-issue.

Now the issue is - I have understood that my bondage is a product of ignorance about my own Self. I have understood that my bondage can be removed only by the removal of this ignorance. But how to remove this ignorance?

The answer is simple - ignorance can only be removed by knowledge. Since I have ignorance about myself, only knowledge of my own self is going to remove this ignorance and hence the bondage.

Liberation is freedom. Freedom from bondage. Bondage is seen and hence illusory and hence a product of ignorance of one's own Self. And hence Self-knowledge alone can result in liberation.

Therefore, the question arises, who am I? I am not mind, I am not body, fine!! But who am I?

VedAnta comes into picture now!!

Here VedAnta comes into picture and explains that "I am Brahman". This is the knowledge which ensures removal of ignorance and consequent removal of bondage and hence liberation. This is called Brahman-AtmA-aikya-jnAna. It is known through mahAvAkya. There are four mahAvAkya which proclaim the identity of AtmA and Brahman namely तत् त्वम् असि, अहं ब्रह्मास्मि, प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म and अयम् आत्मा ब्रह्म. Merely knowing the nature of Brahman and nature of AtmA is not enough. It is their identity which ensures liberation.

Now, once I hear this from VedAnta i.e. Upanishads, I am confused. I have some vague and unclear idea of myself, but I am not really sure about it. I have absolutely no idea of what Brahman is. So, in this situation, when I don't understand the meanings of the word I and Brahman, I cannot make sense of this mahAvAkya.

Thus, as a means to understand mahAvAkya and consequent removal of bondage, it is extremely important to know what Brahman is and what is its nature.

Two meanings of the word Brahman

There are two meanings of the word Brahman. One is called vAchya-artha, literal meaning. And the other is called lakshya-artha, the intended meaning. While the vAchya-artha is SaguNa Brahman, the lakshya-artha is nirguNa Brahman.

The literal meaning of the word Brahman means that nothing is bigger than this. So, Brahman is the biggest. BhAshyakAra says in TaittirIya Upanishad - बृहत्तमत्वात् ब्रह्म.

The vAchya-artha of the word is thus an entity which has a particular dharma, बृहत्तमत्व. It also has a dharma sarva-vyApakatva, that is, it pervades everywhere. Essentially, it is sOpAdhika, which means, it has upAdhi.

What is upAdhi?

UpAdhi is a term which has a clear connotation and definition. It is defined in VedAnta ParibhAshA as उपाधिश्च कार्यानन्वयी व्यावर्तको वर्तमानश्च. For example, the red flower is the upAdhi in the case of red crystal.

So, Brahman, which has MAyA as the upAdhi, is the sOpAdhika-Brahman. This sOpAdhika-Brahman, which is also called as saguNa Brahman, is the vAchya-artha of the word Brahman. It is also called Ishwara. Ishwara has certain features:

- He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world.
- He has jagat-kAraNatva.
- He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent etc.
- He is the inner controller of all beings.
- He is the protector of devotees.

On the other hand, the lakshya-artha of Brahman is nirupAdhika-Brahman, i.e. Brahman without the upAdhi of MAyA. Now, this nirupAdhika Brahman is also called as nirguNa Brahman. It cannot be described by any word, because nirguNa Brahman has no connection with

anything. It has no connection with any word either. That is why it is described in a negative manner, through नेति नेति, or as “not gross, not subtle” etc.

We learnt that whatever is seen is mithyA, an illusion. However, the seer is not illusory, because it is not a seen. However, the seer-hood is a seen. Therefore, seer-hood is illusory. So, what is not illusory is actually the seer without any seer-hood. That is the shuddha nirupAdhika nirguNa Brahman, my own swarUpa, my own real being.

Thus, this entire world, whatever is seen, is illusory and the only reality is nirguNa Brahman.

Now, we see in the world through our experience that every illusory entity has a non-illusory substratum. For example, an illusory snake has rope as the substratum. Similarly, the entire seen has nirguNa nirupAdhika Brahman as the substratum.

VedAnta explains that this nirguNa nirupAdhika Brahman is my swarUpa. That I am not body, I am not mind, I am not a jIva either which situates within this body and mind. I am rather that entity in which this entire world is imagined. I am nirguNa Brahman.

A recap

We saw that we started with the appreciation of our deep bondage. This gives rise to a desire to be free from this bondage. We enquired and found that this bondage is a seen, and seen is illusory and hence a product of ignorance. This ignorance cannot be about a seen, because seen is a product of ignorance. Hence, this ignorance is about the seer. The seer-hood of seer is again a seen and is hence illusory. Hence, the ignorance is about the seer without the seer-hood. That is the reality. So, if we were to know this seer without seer-hood, then only the ignorance about it can be removed as hence our bondage will be removed.

This seer without seer-hood is my real Self which is nirguNa Brahman. This is the lakshya-artha of the word Brahman. This nirguNa Brahman has no

connection with anything. Hence, it cannot be explained using any word. It can only be indicated.

The vAchya-artha of the word Brahman is when we do an adhyArOpa of MAyA in this nirguNa Brahman as an upAdhi. MAyA is a combination of three guNAs namely sattva, rajas and tamas. When this MAyA acts as an upAdhi, then like red crystal, the nirguNa Brahman appears as SaguNa Brahman i.e. Ishwara. He now appears as endowed with qualities, attributes. Ishwara is jagat-kAraNa, sarvajna, sarva-vyApaka, antaryAmI etc. All the descriptions of Bhagvan which we have fit into Ishwara.

What exactly is this MAyA upAdhi

When we analysed the nature of seen, we found it to be illusory, and hence a product of ignorance. This illusory seen is also seen to be a changeable entity. Milk changes into curd and so on. So, this illusory seen, the product of ignorance, must be a change of something. A partless entity cannot transform. That is why ignorance is explained as comprising three guNAs, namely sattva, rajas and tamas.

Now, in truth, MAyA and avidyA are the same. The different words are used to indicate different aspects. The word MAyA is used to indicate the non-existence of ignorance, because being a seen, ignorance itself is non-existent in all three periods of time. And the word ignorance is used to indicate that it is sublated by knowledge about our own Self.

In different prakriyAs, however, sometimes a difference is postulated between MAyA and avidyA. However, in all prakriyAs, both avidyA and MAyA are accepted as triguNAtmikA.

- MAyA is when sattva-guNa has overpowered rajas and tamas. This is called shuddha-sattva-pradhAna. So, MAyA is shuddha-sattva-pradhAna. And when rajas and tamas have overpowered sattva-guNa, then it is called malina-sattva-pradhAna and that is avidyA. So, that condition of

ignorance which is shuddha-sattva-pradhAna is called MAyA and that condition of ignorance which is malina-sattva-pradhAna is called avidyA.

- When sattva is not overpowered by rajas and tamas, then it is also referred to as jnAna-shakti. And when rajas and tamas are not overpowered by sattva, then they are referred to as kriyA-shakti. Here, kriyA-shakti is two-fold, namely AvaraNa-shakti and vikshepa-shakti. Now, rajas which is not dominated by sattva and tamas is known as vikshepa-shakti whereas tamas which is not dominated by sattva and rajas is known as AvaraNa-shakti. Now ignorance where AvaraNa-shakti is predominant is called as avidyA, where ignorance where either vikshepa-shakti or jnAna-shakti is predominant is referred to as MAyA. [**Tattva anusandhAnam**]

SaguNa Brahman is the shuddha nirupAdhika nirguNa Brahman, in which the entire seen is superimposed, with the upAdhi of MAyA.

Why at all is the need of SaguNa Brahman?

We saw that our problem of bondage requires the removal of ignorance about our own Self. And this Self is the seer without seer-hood. This is an entity in which the entire world is superimposed and is indicated by the word Brahman. This indicated reality is devoid of all guNAs. And once that is known as our own Self, then the ignorance will be removed. Thus, nirguNa Brahman is the knowable “ज्ञेय ब्रह्म”.

This sounds all good. Why is then there a need to bring in SaguNa Brahman?

Because NirguNa Brahman is devoid of all attributes, qualities and hence cannot become an object of our thought. We cannot think about it. We can be it, but we cannot think about it. And in order to be it, we need to renounce all connections with everything which is seen.

Now, to renounce all connections with the seen, there has to a certain cleanliness of mind. Renouncing is a mental activity. Mind needs to be completely pure in order to renounce everything and situate as one's own attribute-less Self, which is Brahman.

In order to achieve this purity of mind, SaguNa Brahman is presented by ShAstra as an object of worship, upAsAnA. This is called adhyArOpa.

So, there is adhyArOpa of MAyA upAdhi in the NirguNa Brahman whereby the qualities of MAyA appear in nirguNa Brahman. By this tool, the NirguNa Brahman becomes an object of thought. One can think about Him. And then, once the apavAda, negation, thereof is done, one is left with one's own being, as nirguNa Brahman. So, through adhyArOpa-apavAda, one arrives at the truth of oneself, the nirguNa Brahman.

This adhyArOpa-apavAda also explains the complete illusory nature of the seen and thus establishes the non-duality, advitIyatva of Brahman. Since Brahman is postulated as jagat-kAraNa through adhyArOpa, it is natural that the world must be located only in Brahman. And when apavAda of jagat-kAraNatva is done, world is established to be located nowhere. It is established as a non-existent appearance and thus non-duality of Brahman is taught. [ततः सृष्टिवाक्यादब्रह्मोपादेयत्वज्ञाने सति, उपादानं विना कार्यस्यान्यत्र सद्भावशङ्कायां निरस्तायां, " नेति नेति"(बृ.उ. २.३.६.) इत्यादिना ब्रह्मण्यपि तस्यासत्त्वोपपादनेन प्रपञ्चस्य तुच्छत्वावगमे, निरस्तनिखिलद्वैतविभ्रममखण्डं सच्चिदानन्दैकरसं ब्रह्म सिद्ध्यतीति परम्परया सृष्टिवाक्यानामपि अद्वितीये ब्रह्मण्येव तात्पर्यम्, **VedAnta ParibhAshA**]

So, through adhyArOpa-apavAda, the nirguNa Brahman is taught. Without the adhyArOpa, there is simply no way to take the aspirant to nirguNa Brahman.

Ishwara and Brahman

The vAchya-artha of Brahman is SaguNa Brahman and lakshya-artha is nirguNa Brahman. However, as per usage in shAstra, the word Brahman

indicates its lakshya-artha and only seldom its vAchya-artha. So, whenever the word Brahman is used, we always refer to its lakshya-artha.

Similar is the case with the word Ishwara. Its vAchya-artha is SaguNa Brahman and lakshya-artha is nirguNa Brahman. However, as per the usage in ShAstra, the word Ishwara indicates its vAchya-artha and seldom its lakshya-artha. This is the difference in the usage of the word Brahman and Ishwara. [**VichAra SAgara, page 105**]

This SaguNa Brahman is called Ishwara with the upAdhi of MAyA (predominantly sattva), as HiraNyagrabha with the upAdhi of mahat (predominantly rajas) and as VirAT with the upAdhi of ahamkAra (predominantly tamas). [**Paingala Upanishad**]

HiraNyagarbha is also referred to as kArya-Brahman, apara-Brahman, SaguNa Brahman in bhAshya.

In the Anandamaya adhikaraNa, Bhagvan BhAshyakAra explains the concept of SaguNa and NirguNa Brahman as under:

द्विरूपं हि ब्रह्मावगम्यते — नामरूपविकारभेदोपाधिविशिष्टम् , तद्विपरीतं च सर्वोपाधिविवर्जितम् । *'यत्र हि द्वैतमिव भवति तदितर इतरं पश्यति' (बृ. उ. २ । ४ । १४) 'यत्र त्वस्य सर्वमात्मैवाभूत्तत्केन कं पश्येत्' (बृ. उ. ४ । ५ । १५) 'यत्र नान्यत्पश्यति नान्यच्छृणोति नान्यद्विजानाति स भूमाथ यत्रान्यत्पश्यत्यन्यच्छृणोत्यन्यद्विजानाति तदल्पम्; यो वै भूमा तदमृतमथ यदल्पं तन्मर्त्यम्' (छा. उ. ७ । २४ । १) 'सर्वाणि रूपाणि विचित्य धीरो नामानि कृत्वाभिवदन्यदास्ते' (तै. आ. ३ । १२ । ७) 'निष्कलं निष्क्रियं शान्तं निरवद्यं निरञ्जनम् । अमृतस्य परं सेतुं दग्धेन्धनमिवानलम्' (श्वे. उ. ६ । १९) 'नेति नेति' (बृ. उ. २ । ३ । ६) 'अस्थूलमनण्वह्रस्वमदीर्घम्' (बृ. उ. ३ । ८ । ८) 'न्यूनमन्यत्स्थानं सम्पूर्णमन्यत्' इति* **चैवं सहस्रशो विद्याविद्याविषयभेदेन ब्रह्मणो द्विरूपतां दर्शयन्ति वाक्यानि** ।

तत्राविद्यावस्थायां ब्रह्मण उपास्योपासकादिलक्षणः सर्वो व्यवहारः । तत्र कानिचिद्ब्रह्मण उपासनान्यभ्युदयार्थानि, कानिचित्क्रममुक्त्यर्थानि, कानिचित्कर्मसमृद्ध्यर्थानि । तेषां गुणविशेषोपाधिभेदेन भेदः । एक एव तु परमात्मेश्वरस्तैस्तैर्गुणविशेषैर्विशिष्ट उपास्यो यद्यपि भवति, तथापि यथागुणोपासनमेव फलानि भिद्यन्ते; 'तं यथा यथोपासते तदेव भवति' इति श्रुतेः, *'यथाक्रतुरस्मिँल्लोके पुरुषो भवति, तथेतः प्रेत्य भवति' (छा. उ. ३ । १४ । १) इति च । स्मृतेश्च — 'यं यं वापि स्मरन्भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेबरम् । तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभावितः' (भ. गी. ८ । ६) इति* । **यद्यप्येक आत्मा सर्वभूतेषु स्थावरजङ्गमेषु गूढः, तथापि चित्तोपाधिविशेषतारतम्यादात्मनः कूटस्थनित्यस्यैकरूपस्याप्युत्तरोत्तरमाविष्कृतस्य तारतम्यमैश्वर्यशक्तिविशेषैः श्रूयते** — *'तस्य य आत्मानमाविस्तरां वेद' (ऐ. आ. २ । ३ । २ । १) इत्यत्र । स्मृतावपि — 'यद्यद्विभूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव वा । तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोंऽशसम्भवम्' (भ. गी. १० । ४१) इति* **यत्र यत्र विभूत्याद्यतिशयः, स स ईश्वर इत्युपास्यतया चोद्यते ।**

एवमिहाप्यादित्यमण्डले हिरण्मयः पुरुषः सर्वपाप्मोदयलिङ्गात्पर एवेति वक्ष्यति । एवम् 'आकाशस्तल्लिङ्गात्' (ब्र. सू. १ । १ । २२) इत्यादिषु द्रष्टव्यम् । एवं सद्योमुक्तिकारणमप्यात्मज्ञानमुपाधिविशेषद्वारेणोपदिश्यमानमप्यविवक्षितोपाधिसम्बन्धविशेषं परापरविषयत्वेन सन्दिह्यमानं वाक्यगतिपर्यालोचनया निर्णेतव्यं भवति — यथेहैव तावत् 'आनन्दमयोऽभ्यासात्' इति । एवमेकमपि ब्रह्मापेक्षितोपाधिसम्बन्धं निरस्तोपाधिसम्बन्धं चोपास्यत्वेन ज्ञेयत्वेन च वेदान्तेषूपदिश्यत इति प्रदर्शयितुं परो ग्रन्थ आरभ्यते ।

Thus, basically AchArya is saying that singular non-dual Brahman through upAdhi-sambandha and rejection-of-upAdhi-sambandha is taught as an object of worship and as an object of knowledge respectively in VedAnta. Here, it must be noted that upAsanA of Ishwara is within the domain of avidyA because it is only the knowledge of nirguNa Brahman that can eradicate ignorance. In that ignorance state, SaguNa Brahman can be worshipped for abhyudaya, krama-mukti, karma-samriddhi etc. These all depend on the specific upAdhi of SaguNa Brahman.

These upAsanA and karma done with IshwarArpita-buddhi lead to purity of mind which gives the eligibility to situate as one's own Self.

BrahmA, Vishnu and Shiva

Ishwara is referred to as Vishnu when the sustenance of the world is carried out, as BrahmA when creation of the world is carried out and as Shiva when destruction of the world is carried out. Thus, the same Ishwara tattva, SaguNa Brahman, is referred to by the words BrahmA, Vishnu and Shiva. Either form can be used for upAsanA.

Description of nirguNa Brahman

We saw that the ultimate reality, nirguNa Brahman, cannot be adequately described through words. Thus, it is described in a negative manner through अप्राण, अमन, नेति, नेति, अस्थूल, अनणु, अह्रस्व, अदीर्घ, निष्कल, निष्क्रिय, निरवद्य, निरञ्जन etc. The whole idea is to negate everything which can be cognized with mind. Tulasidas ji says in Ramcharitmanas - गो गोचर जहँ लगि मन जाई। सो सब माया जानेहु भाई॥ So, everything which can be described through words, everything which

can be cognized by mind, are all rejected and one thus negatively describes nirguNa Brahman.

However, Brahman is also described positively in ways such as सत्यम्, ज्ञानम्, अनन्तम्, विज्ञानम्, शान्तम्, शुभ्र, सत् etc. Now, these words also have Brahman as lakshya-artha and not as vAchya-artha. Further, satya-tva, jnAna-tva, ananta-tva, Ananda-tva are the very swarUpa of Brahman and hence these are not some attributes which can militate against the nirguNa-tva of Brahman.

- Satya-tva refers to non-changeability.
- Sat-tva refers to non-sublatability.
- JnAna-tva refers to non-inerthood.
- Ananta-tva refers to non-limitation.
- Ananda-tva refers to not being the object of any desire other than its own.

In order to understand a little more technically, it is defined as under:

Name of dharma	If abhAva is identical to adhikaraNa	If abhAva is not identical to adhikaraNa
satyatva	mithyAtva-abhAva	mithyAtva-abhAva-vishishTa-tAdAtmya-upalakshita-swarUpatva
advitIyatva	dvitIyatva-abhAva	dvitIyatva-abhAva-visishTa-tAdAtmya-upalakshita-swarUpatva
swaprakAshatva	paraprakAshatva-abhAva	paraprakAshyatva-abhAva-visishTa-tAdAtmya-upalakshita-swarUpatva
vibhutva	desha-parichchheda-abhAva	desha-parichchheda-abhAva-visishTa-tAdAtmya-upalakshita-swarUpatva
pUrNatva	vastu-parichchheda-abhAva	vastu-parichchheda-abhAva-visishTa-tAdAtmya-upalakshita-swarUpatva
nityatva	kAla-parichchheda-abhAva	kAla-parichchheda-abhAva-vishishTa-tAdAtmya-upalakshita-swarUpatva)

sattva	bAdhyatva-abhAva	bAdhyatva-abhAva-vishishTa-tAdAtmya-upalakshita-swarUpatva

jnAna-tva = jaDa-anyatva-vishishTa-tAdAtmya-upalakshita-swarUpatva or artha-prakAshatva-vishishTa-tAdAtmya-upalakshita-swarUpatva.

Ananda-tva = निरुपाधिक-इष्टत्व-विशिष्ट-तादात्म्य-उपलक्षित-स्वरूपत्वम्

Brahman is said to be advitIya. That is to say, there is no second to it. That is, there is neither swagata-bheda, nor sajAtIya-bheda nor vijAtIya-bheda. It is singular inactive reality.

The idea is that these words have distinction in so far as their vAchya-artha is concerned. Their vAchya-artha is vishishTa-chit. However, their lakshya-artha is upalakshita-chit.

Similarly, in MANDukya Upanishad, the Shruti says - नान्तःप्रज्ञं नबहिःप्रज्ञं नोभयतःप्रज्ञं नप्रज्ञानघनं नप्रज्ञं नाप्रज्ञम् । अदृश्यमव्यवहार्यमग्राह्यमलक्षणमचिन्त्यमव्यपदेश्यमेकात्मप्रत्ययसारं प्रपञ्चोपशमं शान्तं शिवमद्वैतं चतुर्थं मन्यन्ते स आत्मा स विज्ञेयः ॥

The whole idea of this description is to ensure that the mind renounces everything cognizable and becomes single-pointed having Brahma-AkAra-vritti after listening to mahAvAkya. This ensures that even that vritti vanishes post removal of ignorance and one situates as one's own Self.

Description of SaguNa Brahman

Whenever Brahman is positively described having any sort of guNa, it is the description of saguNa Brahman. So, terms such as Ishwara, Satya-kAma, Satya-samkalpa, Sarva-shaktimAn, Sarva-jna etc. refer to SaguNa Brahman. Wherever Brahman is described with forms such as those of Ram, Vishnu, Krishna, Shiva, HiraNyagarbha etc, it is the description of SaguNa Brahman.

SaguNa Brahman is variously defined based on different prakriyAs. A few of them are as under:

VivaraNa defines Ishwara as ajnAna-upahita-bimba-chaitanya.

Samkshepa ShArIraka defines Ishwara as ajnAna-pratibimbita-chaitanya.

Eka-jIva-vAda defines Ishwara as ajnAna-upahita-chaitanya.

The sum and substance is this. There is appearance of guNAs pertaining to MAyA in nirguNa Brahman due to adhyArOpa. Through this adhyArOpa, nirguNa Brahman appears as SaguNa Brahman.

SaguNa Brahman is the object of worship. NirguNa Brahman is the object of knowledge. [एवमेकमपि ब्रह्मापेक्षितोपाधिसम्बन्धं निरस्तोपाधिसम्बन्धं चोपास्यत्वेन ज्ञेयत्वेन च वेदान्तेषूपदिश्यत इति]. Through upAsanA of SaguNa Brahman, we get the requisite purity of mind and ability to situate in jnAna of nirguNa Brahman and thus finally abide in and as our own Self.